

PRINTING HOUSE ROW DISTRICT

PRELIMINARY SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

ORIGINALLY SUBMITTED TO THE
COMMISSION ON CHICAGO
HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL LANDMARKS
IN DECEMBER, 1979

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PRINTING HOUSE ROW DISTRICT

The proposed boundaries encompass the Dearborn Street Station and the original printing, commercial, and light industrial buildings fronting on Plymouth Court and Dearborn and Federal streets, between Congress Parkway and Polk Street.

The Printing House Row District developed during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century. It was during these years that flourishing printing and publishing businesses along South Dearborn Street commissioned a number of prominent Chicago architects to design their facilities, resulting today in a unique collection of architecturally significant commercial structures concentrated in an area that recalls an important era in the city's economic history.

Historical Development of the Printing House Row District

As Chicago rapidly rebuilt after the Great Fire of 1871, differentiated land use developed in the Loop area. State Street became the retail center of downtown Chicago with the inception of the department store operations of Marshall Field and Company, Levi Z. Leiter, and Carson Pirie Scott and Company. Simultaneously, LaSalle Street emerged as the financial and trading district as the Chicago Board of Trade and major banks and office buildings located there. Cultural pursuits were focused on South Michigan Avenue following construction of the Auditorium Theater, the Fine Arts Building, the Art Institute, and the Chicago Public Library. Between the years 1883 and 1912, the majority of the structures along and around South Dearborn Street were commissioned by and designed to conform to the various needs of printing and publishing enterprises, and the district was christened Printing House Row. Several factors contributed to the viability of this area for specialized commercial and light industrial use.

Paramount was the spectacular growth of Chicago as the railroad capital of the nation. By 1869, Chicago was linked to the producers and consumers of both the East and West

coasts through a vast network of direct and connecting lines, and by the 1880s, over two dozen railroads served the city. The construction in 1883-85 of the Dearborn Street Station, a Romanesque style terminal designed by Cyrus L. W. Eidlitz (designated a Chicago Landmark on March 2, 1982), located at Dearborn and Polk streets, made this location ideal for commercial development.

Railroads not only freighted in the requisite raw materials for printers, but also brought in an equally indispensable human resource. Between 1870 and 1890, an influx of German, Irish, Italian, and Polish immigrants swelled the population of Chicago, providing large numbers of manual laborers as well as craftsmen trained in the satellite skills of printing: typesetting, etching, mapmaking, bookbinding, etc. These and other subsidiary skills and techniques were all necessary components of the printing and publishing industries, and it was logical that they would all choose to be located in close proximity in order to expedite completion of a finished product.

The street layout of this area was the second essential factor that made printing and publishing industries decide to locate here. The block between Clark and Dearborn streets is bisected by Federal Street and the block between Dearborn and State is bisected by Plymouth Court, forming long, narrow blocks that do not exist anywhere else in the downtown area. This meant that buildings on these sites would be long and slab-like, admitting a maximum of light into tall buildings; that the long lines of presses could be arranged in an orderly fashion; and that convenient access and egress would be possible along the narrower parallel streets for freight and along the more important Dearborn Street for the public.

In addition, as the United States changed from a rural, agricultural nation to an urban, industrialized one, printing and publishing became important to the more diversified, better educated American public. Merchandising was one sector of the American economy that was radically transformed during the last decades of the nineteenth century. During these years, the concept of mail-order merchandising was pioneered into an enormously profitable business, and the printing and publishing industries were largely responsible for its success.

The mail-order catalogue evolved from a single-page itemization of goods to a volume of more than 500 pages. The credibility of mail-order merchandising was a constant problem. Wary farmers, accustomed to the honesty and reliability of the small-town merchant, feared being duped by "city slickers." A sophisticated and responsive printing and publishing industry was able to produce vivid illustrations and detailed descriptions of products as well as lengthy instructions on how to use them, thereby assuring the customer of the reliability of his purchase. Catalogue printers, such as Donohue and Henneberry and Lakeside Press, found lucrative clients in men such as A. Montgomery Ward, Richard W. Sears, and Alvah Roebuck, innovators of this new marketing technique.

Several other major Chicago printers and publishers satisfied the needs of this increasingly complex American society on various levels. R.R. Donnelley and Sons was

most noted for its directories of Chicago residents, businesses, and organizations. Rand McNally produced railroad timetables, shippers' guides, and the maps and atlases with which their name is synonymous today. The 1880s and 1890s saw an expanded market for the production of inexpensive reading material for mass consumption. W.B. Conkey Company and Belford Clark and Company provided affordable editions of the classics as well as of popular authors such as Anthony Trollope and Wilkie Collins.

Fleming H. Revell, who rebuilt his business after the Chicago Fire of 1871, was reputed by 1890 to be the largest publisher of religious works in the United States and produced, among other works, the biblical treatises of his brother-in-law, Chicago evangelist Dwight L. Moody.

Publishing also found a ready market in the burgeoning labor movement, and the firms of William C. Hollister and Brothers and Eight-Hour Printers issued booklets and pamphlets that voiced the concerns of this sector of the American public.

The 1880s, 1890s, and early 1900s also saw Chicago gain literary eminence through such authors as Carl Sandburg, Theodore Dreiser, and Hamlin Garland. A vigorous and thriving publishing industry provided a firm foundation for their continued success. This same era saw the proliferation of periodical literature, a genre that established the professional prestige of Chicagoans such as poet Eugene Field and illustrator John T. McCutcheon, and at one time dozens of periodicals were printed in Chicago.

Printing and publishing were among the dominant industries that contributed substantially to Chicago's wealth and prosperity. More than that, the bookmen and their businesses established Chicago's reputation as a mature metropolis, one which was in no way culturally inferior to the older cities of the East. In *A History of Chicago, 1871-1893*, Bessie Louise Pierce states: "...the industry of printing and publishing...exemplified the city's cultural manufactures, giving to her as the *Western Manufacturer* saw it 'a certain "eclat" not enjoyed by places devoted more exclusively to merely mechanical industries.' "

Architectural Development of the Printing House Row District

Within the context of commercial architecture in this district, it is possible to identify two distinct building types: the printing house loft structure and the multi-function office building. Three notable examples of the printing house loft structure are the Donohue Building, the Lakeside Press Building, and the New Franklin Building.

The Donohue Building and Annex at 711 and 727 South Dearborn Street consists of an original structure designed in 1883 by Julius Speyer and an addition designed in 1913 by Alfred S. Alschuler. The original structure is eight stories high and built of St. Louis pressed brick with granite and brownstone trim. Stylistically it is Romanesque revival as exemplified by its massive masonry entrance supported by short, sturdy columns; the smooth piers with enriched capitals; and the ribbon-like fenestration. A style often

employed for railway stations, churches, and court houses, the Romanesque revival frequently featured a tower. A line drawing from *Commercial and Architectural Chicago*, an 1887 publication by G.W. Orear, illustrates that originally the Donohue had an elaborate tower extending two stories above the roof line.

Contemporaneous with the Dearborn Street Station and built to take advantage of this new transportation facility, the Donohue is a prototypical design for a printing house, with its disposition of specialized functions on each floor. The presses were located in the long, narrow basement spaces. The street-level floor was rented out to a variety of shopkeepers. The second through the fifth floors housed the offices of the publishing companies whose works were printed by Donohue and Henneberry. The sixth floor contained the home offices of Donohue and Henneberry, while the eighth floor, which received the most abundant natural light, was reserved for the more intricate work of bookbinding. The Donohue firm was started in 1861 by Michael Donohue, a native of Ireland, and was run by him, his four sons, and his three grandsons for 85 years. The Donohues published children's books and did commercial printing until 1925.

The Lakeside Press Building at 731 South Plymouth Court was commissioned by the Donnelley company, which like the Donohue concern was a family-owned and -operated business. It grew to be one of the giants of the printing and publishing industry. About the time of the Civil War, R.R. Donnelley came from Canada to Chicago and set up shop as a printer. R.R. Donnelley and Sons today is one of the country's largest printers.

The commission for the design of the Lakeside Press Building was given to Howard Van Doren Shaw (1868-1926) and the structure was built in 1897 and 1901. Anticipating further growth, the company requested a structure that could be built in two stages. Consequently, the four southern bays were completed in 1897 and the four northern ones in 1901. The building is seven stories high and is built of brick and cast iron with limestone detail and decoration. The first and second floors were used for showrooms and editorial offices, respectively. Special attention was given to the entrance facade which focuses on a lintel supported by free-standing limestone columns. Printing took place on the fourth through the sixth floors, which are strongly articulated by massive brick piers. A curtain wall is recessed behind the piers. Large double-hung windows with iron spandrels mark each floor. The spandrels display the large iron bolts that hold them in place. Each structural bay is capped at the seventh floor by a semi-circular brick arch in which are set three-part windows in a stone frame. At this level textured brickwork has been used to define the corner quoins and in the projecting cornice. The cornice conceals the eighth-floor penthouse. The family offices were on the seventh and eighth floors. The logo of the Lakeside Press, an Indian head superimposed on a representation of Fort Dearborn, is used as the primary decorative motif and can be found in limestone relief at the top of each pier and over the main entrance.

The architect Howard Van Doren Shaw is best remembered for the palatial urban and suburban residences he designed for established and affluent Chicago society (among his

Lake Forest designs are the residences of the Donnelley sons, Thomas and Reuben). The Lakeside Press Building was Shaw's first non-residential design. The Donnelley company magazine *The Printer* said of the architect and this commission: "His architectural plans for The Lakeside Press Building were traditional in character, but designed with great originality. The structure is considered to be one of the first industrial buildings which was designed so attractively that it reflected the high caliber of work produced in it."

The Franklin Building at 718-736 South Dearborn Street is a 1912 design of George C. Nimmons (1865-1947), a major Prairie school architect. A contemporary of other noted industrial architects, Dwight Perkins and Richard E. Schmidt, Nimmons is best known for his Reid, Murdoch and Company Warehouse of 1912-13 (designated a Chicago Landmark on November 15, 1976).

The New Franklin Building contains elements of the two parallel trends of the Chicago school. The first is described by Carl Condit as "highly empirical in its concern with utilitarian and structural ends" and its most representative practitioners were firms such as Holabird & Roche. The New Franklin Building embodies this trend in its straightforward design. A thirteen-story structure, the Franklin Building consists of eight structural bays and is sheathed in warm brown brick. Simplicity and clarity of design are exhibited in the treatment of the third through the tenth floors. The continuous brick piers and broad spandrels are of uniform proportions. The windows are arranged in identical groupings: the northern and southern end bays contain symmetrically arranged pairs of double-hung windows. The center bays are arranged in tiers of three double-hung windows.

The second trend of the Chicago school derived inspiration from Louis Sullivan and is described by Condit as "more concerned with ornamental variety and originality and with the plastic possibilities of building design." Nimmons has expressed this in the unusual gable treatment of the parapet surmounting the building. Equally distinctive is the position of the entrance in the northern end bay with a deeply recessed door which throws into relief the elaborate treatment of the framing, a simple post and lintel system sheathed in decorative tile. Even more striking is the polychrome tile panel directly above the entrance which depicts men at work on the first printing presses. Polychrome tile is used elsewhere on the facade in abstract patterns.

By the second decade of the twentieth century, the Chicago school was on the wane, and this building is significant in its incorporation and combination of the two main-streams of architectural style and interpretation that its leaders espoused.

Several office buildings were constructed to accommodate small businesses, light industry, and retail concerns catering to the street traffic of Dearborn Street. The Pontiac Building, the Terminals Building, the Morton Building, and the Transportation Building are illustrative of the various phases and interpretation of a commercial architecture that was evolving during the important years of the Chicago school of architecture (approximately 1875-1910).

The Pontiac Building at 542 South Dearborn Street, completed in 1891, is the work of Holabird and Roche, a successful and prolific partnership that from 1883 until 1928 was responsible for seventy-two commercial buildings in downtown Chicago.

Neither William Holabird nor Martin Roche were native Chicagoans. Holabird, born in New York state in 1854 and educated at West Point, came to Chicago in 1875. Roche was born in Ohio in 1855 and came to Chicago in his youth. In 1880 Holabird formed his own firm with Ossian C. Simonds and in 1881 they were joined by Roche. In 1883, Simonds left to specialize in landscape architecture, and the firm of Holabird and Roche was founded.

Both Holabird and Roche had been trained in the office of William LeBaron Jenney, one of the pioneers in the development of skeletal construction. This construction method employs a metal frame, or skeleton, to support the weight of a building, freeing its exterior walls from their bearing function. Combined with fireproofing and wind-bracing, skeletal construction meant that buildings could be taller and consequently take maximum advantage of premium Loop land. The years spent in Jenney's office provided Holabird and Roche with a thorough grounding in the principles of this new building technology.

The major contribution of the office of Holabird and Roche during its forty-five year history was the design of office buildings that were both technically advanced and visually pleasing without resorting to the precedent of historical architectural styles. The Pontiac is an example of the early work of Holabird and Roche who, according to architectural historian Carl Condit, "most completely represented the purpose and achievement of the mainstream of the Chicago school."

The Pontiac Building is the oldest extant work of Holabird and Roche. Named after an Ottawa Indian chief, it was commissioned by developers Peter and Shepard Brooks of Boston. These brothers farsightedly recognized the potential profits to be made from the taller, more functional buildings of the Chicago school and were interested in speculating in Chicago real estate.

The Pontiac Building is a fourteen-story, skeletal frame structure. The first two stories form a base, while the remaining twelve compose the shaft of the building. Strong vertical piers, rising from low, rusticated stone bases, mark the four corners of the building. The whole is tautly enclosed in brick sheathing.

The entrance facade faces east on Dearborn Street. The second floor is articulated by thin piers and features the Chicago window, consisting of a stationary center pane flanked by double-hung windows. The windows of the third through the thirteenth floor are arranged identically on the east and west facades. On either side of a narrow central bay window, a wider but shallower bay with four double-hung windows spans two structural bays. On the southern facade, a central bay window is flanked by pairs of double-hung windows flush with the wall surface. The fourteenth floor, terminating in a simple cornice, is flat with double-hung windows whose spacing repeats the pattern of the windows in the stories below.

Ornamentation is minimal, apparent only in a single course of terra cotta at the level of the lintels, and at the base and cornice. The overall design is economical and straightforward. Here is the embryonic form of an architectural style that sought to enhance rather than deny the structural steel framework and that would culminate in the contemporary skyscraper.

As the oldest surviving work of Holabird and Roche, one of the pre-eminent architectural firms of Chicago, the Pontiac Building is an important document of the early phases of the Chicago school of architecture.

The Terminals Building at 537 South Dearborn was completed in 1892 and was one of the last works of John M. Van Osdel (1811-1891), who in 1841 became the first man to establish himself professionally as an architect in Chicago.

The Terminals Building is fourteen stories high with a heavily rusticated masonry base three stories high. The fourth through the eleventh floors are faced in smooth brick with stone trim above the windows. The five structural bays are expressed on the facade. The windows of the two end bays are set into projecting oriels from the third through the thirteenth floors. The windows of the three center bays are arranged in vertical bands that terminate in an arch at the twelfth floor. At the thirteenth floor the windows above the arches are set flush with the wall. All of the windows of the fourteenth floor are set in a single band flush with the wall. The building originally was capped by a substantial cornice which has been removed. A listing of this building in *Chicago Central and Business Directory, 1916* describes it as the "home of many of the largest trade periodicals in the West."

The Morton Building at 538 South Dearborn Street was designed in 1896 by the prominent Chicago firm of Jenney and Mundie. This building is eleven stories high. The facade, composed of brick and stone, expresses the three structural bays. The base is formed by the first two stories. This is delineated by a horizontal decorative frieze and by the use of a column-capital motif to frame the windows and the entrance, which is surmounted by a recessed arch. Classical ornamentation is repeated in the cornice. At the third story, two atlantes figures support the oriels of the first and third structural bays. The main portion of the building, the fourth through the tenth floors, is straightforward in design and unadorned; the first and third bays project to admit the maximum amount of light.

The leading principal in the firm of Jenney and Mundie was William LeBaron Jenney who is credited with perfecting the engineering system of internal steel framing, the major structural innovation that led directly to the development of the Chicago school. Carl Condit has described this structure as "a compromise between the fresh architectural spirit of the Sears Roebuck Store and the classical traditions of the Columbian Exposition in which Jenney had a major hand." Although brilliantly gifted as an engineer, Jenney was not always so able a designer, and the Morton Building reflects this uncertainty.

The Transportation Building at 708 South Dearborn Street was constructed in 1911. Designed by architect Fred V. Prather, it was intended to house railway company offices

and other businesses that required proximity to the railroads. The overall outline of this building most clearly illustrates the thin, slab-like character of the structures in the area. The Transportation Building is twenty-two stories high and is the tallest building in the district. Apparently the uniformity and regularity of the exterior of this building were offset by the rich appointment of the interior corridors and public spaces which utilized mosaic, marble, and mahogany woodwork. The severity and simplicity of this structure are indicative of the direct approach to the design of the office building taken by the Chicago school.

The Borland Buildings at 610-732 South Federal Street were built as a series and date from 1910 through 1928. At that time, Charles Frost (1856-1931), the architect, was locally as well as nationally well-known. Originally a New Englander, he was educated at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, coming to Chicago in 1882 where he formed a partnership with Henry Ives Cobb. The firm of Cobb and Frost was responsible for such noted Chicago structures as the Potter Palmer mansion, the Newberry Library, and the Second Chicago Historical Society Building. From 1898 until 1910, Frost practiced with Alfred Hoyt Granger with whom he specialized in railroad station design. The 1911 Chicago and North Western Terminal in Chicago exemplified their work in this field.

Facing on South Dearborn Street are three pre-1900 buildings for which the architects are unknown. The earliest is the Duplicator Building (530 South Dearborn Street) built in 1886. Across the street the Old Franklin Building (525 South Dearborn Street) was constructed in 1886 and, farther south, the Rowe Building (714 South Dearborn Street) in 1892. All display the functional hallmarks of the typical loft-style printing house: simple masonry with a minimum of ornament and large windows for maximum natural lighting.

Gradually during the 1930s and 1940s, the printing companies, especially the larger ones, vacated their premises on South Dearborn Street. After World War II, photo offset began to replace the traditional letterpress printing method. The new heavier presses created a substantial strain on the floorload of the older buildings, causing many printers to move to one-story concrete structures. Additionally, the narrow streets of the district could no longer handle the volume of truck traffic needed to supply paper to the speedily productive offset presses. These changes in technology as well as a more advantageous tax situation prompted many companies to relocate to the suburbs. Parallel to this trend was the decline of the railroad as the nation's primary transportation system. With the boom of the airline industry, the Dearborn Street Station gradually ceased to be a major transportation facility and came to function only as a visual anchor to South Dearborn Street. By the 1960s Printing House Row was almost a totally derelict area.

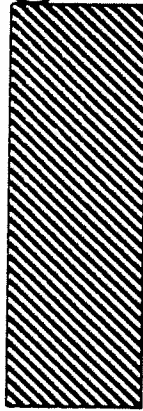
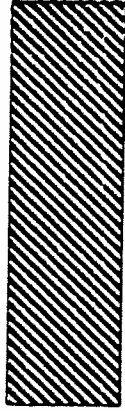
However, this once-thriving commercial district is today being transformed into a vital mixed-use area. The roomy loft areas permit customized space planning and unique living arrangements. Buoyed by imaginative private investment and creative real estate enterprises, Printing House Row is currently acclaimed as one of Chicago's premier models of adaptive re-use, and has the potential to become a national prototype for successful urban revitalization.

PROPOSED PRINTING HOUSE ROW DISTRICT

1. **THE BORLAND BUILDINGS**
610-732 South Federal Street
2. **THE DUPLICATOR BUILDING**
530 South Dearborn Street
3. **THE MORTON BUILDING**
538 South Dearborn Street
4. **THE PONTIAC BUILDING**
542 South Dearborn Street
5. **THE TRANSPORTATION BUILDING**
600 South Dearborn Street
6. **THE ROWE BUILDING**
714 South Dearborn Street
7. **THE NEW FRANKLIN BUILDING**
720 South Dearborn Street
8. **THE DEARBORN STREET STATION**
47 West Polk Street
9. **THE OLD FRANKLIN BUILDING**
525 South Dearborn Street
10. **THE TERMINALS BUILDING**
537 South Dearborn Street
11. 555 South Dearborn Street
12. 639 South Dearborn Street
13. **THE DONOHUE BUILDING**
711 South Dearborn Street
14. **THE DONOHUE ANNEX**
727 South Dearborn Street
15. **COMMONWEALTH EDISON SUB-STATION**
521 South Plymouth Court
16. **THE PETERSON BUILDING**
523 South Plymouth Court
17. **THE MERGENTHALER BUILDING**
531 South Plymouth Court
18. **THE MOSER BUILDING**
631 South Plymouth Court
19. 633 South Plymouth Court
20. 711 South Plymouth Court
21. **THE LAKESIDE PRESS BUILDING**
731 South Plymouth Court

Congress

Clark



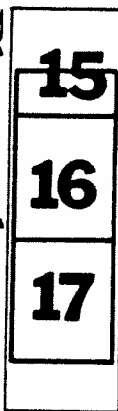
Federal



Dearborn

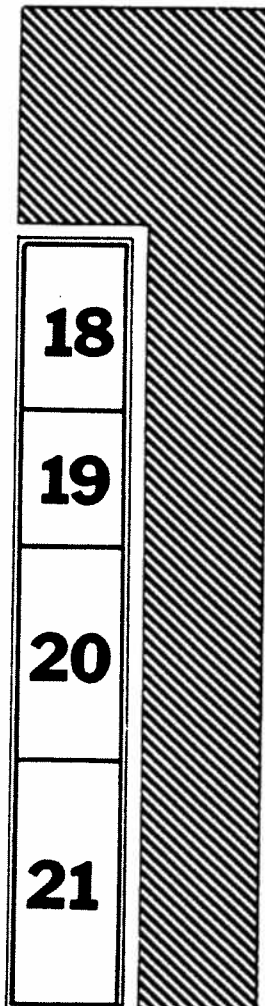
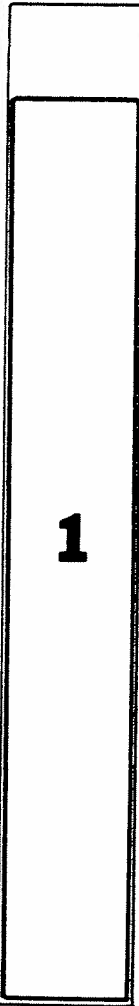


Plymouth

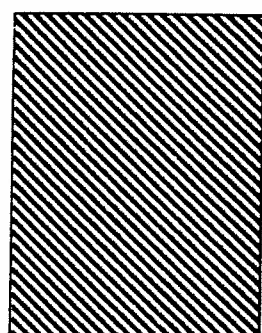
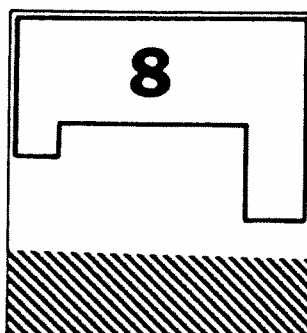
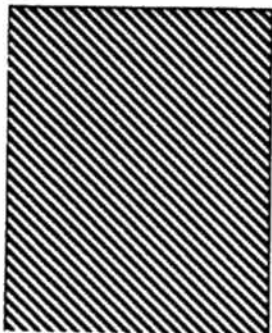


State

Harrison



Polk



OPPOSITE:

Contemporaneous with the Dearborn Street Station, the Donohue Building is Romanesque revival in style.

(Ron Gordon, photographer)



OPPOSITE:

The logo of the Lakeside Press was used as the primary decorative motif on the Lakeside Press Building and is found in limestone relief at the top of each pier.

(Ron Gordon, photographer)



OPPOSITE:

A distinctive feature of the Franklin Building is the polychrome tile that ornaments the facade. Directly above the entrance is a panel that depicts men at work on the first printing presses.

(Ron Gordon, photographer)



OPPOSITE:

The Pontiac Building, completed in 1891, is the oldest extant work of the important Chicago architectural firm of Holabird and Roche.

(Ron Gordon, photographer)



OPPOSITE:

The classical detail on the Morton Building reflects the influence of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition on architect William LeBaron Jenney.

(Ron Gordon, photographer)



OPPOSITE:

The overall outline of the Transportation Building clearly illustrates the thin, slab-like character of many buildings in the area.

(Ron Gordon, photographer)



OPPOSITE:

The clock tower of the Dearborn Street Station serves as a visual anchor to the Printing House Row District. To the right are the Franklin and Rowe buildings, which typify the functional loft-style printing house.

(Ron Gordon, photographer)



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Additional research material used in the preparation of this report is on file at the office of the Commission on Chicago Landmarks and is available to the public.

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Printing House Row, circa 1925, oil on canvas.

By Robert Addison

The Commission on Chicago Landmarks was established in 1968 by city ordinance, and was given the responsibility of recommending to the City Council that specific landmarks be preserved and protected by law. The ordinance states that the Commission, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor, can recommend any area, building, structure, work of art, or other object that has sufficient historical, community, or aesthetic value. Once the City Council acts on the Commission's recommendation and designates a Chicago Landmark, the ordinance provides for the preservation, protection, enhancement, rehabilitation, and perpetuation of that landmark. The Commission assists by carefully reviewing all applications for building permits pertaining to the designated Chicago Landmarks. This insures that any proposed alteration does not detract from the qualities that caused the landmark to be designated.

The Commission makes its recommendations to the City Council only after extensive study. This preliminary summary of information has been prepared by the Commission staff and was submitted to the Commission when it initiated consideration of the historical and architectural qualities of this potential landmark.



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